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## NEWS

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#### Pennsylvania News

### Professor fears terminal harm to creek life

Says liner on stream bed will prevent fish from laying eggs, limit food source. Related Story./ A-1

Saturday, September 25, 2004

By **ALYSSA YOUNG**  
The Express-Times

Patricia Bradt has studied the Bushkill Creek for more than 30 years, devoting most of her attention to the tiny invertebrates that live on the creek bottom.

The organisms that live in the stream's sediment make up the base of the food chain in the waterway, which is classified as a high-quality cold-water brown trout fishery.

That's what prompted Bradt, an environmental science professor at Muhlenberg College, to write letters to several state officials when she learned about plans to install an impermeable liner along 1,400 feet of the stream bed.

If the project is approved, life in the creek may never be the same again, her letters say.

"I'm really concerned," Bradt said in a telephone interview. "They're basically removing the ecosystem."

Hercules Cement Co. of Stockertown and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation have applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for permits to line about a quarter-mile of the Bushkill Creek, from just north of the Norfolk Southern Railroad bridge to just south of the Route 33 North bridge.

Hercules already has permits to line a 550-foot section of the creek on its property. It started setting up pipes and pumps last week, but the flood washed them away.

The stream bed is speckled with sinkholes, which already have destroyed three bridges that span that stretch of the creek. Installing a liner will create a sinkhole barrier and prevent water from leaking into Hercules' quarry, state officials say.

Lining the creek will require building a dam and installing pipes to divert water

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around the work site, excavating the stream bed and filling existing sinkholes, covering the floor of the creek with a fabric liner and a mixture of clay and concrete, then spreading the dirt that was dug from the stream bed on top of the liner.

A September 2002 letter Bradt wrote to the Army Corps when Hercules applied for its first permit says the mean density of the organisms that live in the stream bed is 167 per square foot.

"It will take years for the invertebrate, algal and microbiological communities to recover," Bradt wrote this month to the state Department of Environmental Protection, Fish and Boat Commission and Trout Unlimited. "Many essential components of the stream ecosystem are being removed, hampering greatly the ability of the entire ecosystem to recover."

She also says the concrete-like cover topping the liner will prevent invertebrates from burrowing into the ground and will create an unsuitable habitat for spawning brown trout.

Bradt, who sits on the Bushkill Stream Conservancy board of directors, said the stream bed material should be kept moist during the project so the organisms survive and should be returned to the stream as quickly as possible.

The stream conservancy is willing to help reintroduce the invertebrates to the stream, she wrote.

The Army Corps and the state Department of Environmental Protection will consider concerns such as Bradt's at the end of the permit application's public comment period next month.

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